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ROMANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greetings Salutations	Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1-7	1:1-7	1:1-6	1:1	1:1-2
			1:2-6	
				1:3-7
		1:7a	1:7a	
		1:7b	1:7b	
Paul's Desire to Visit Rome	Desire to Visit Rome	Thanksgiving	Prayer of Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving and Prayer
1:8-15	1:8-15	1:8-15	1:8-12	1:8-15
			1:13-15	
The Power of the Gospel	The Just Live By Faith	The Theme of the Letter	The Power of the Gospel	The Theme Stated
1:16-17	1:16-17	1:16-17	1:16-17	1:16-17
The Guilt of Mankind	God's Wrath on Unrighteousness	God's Judgment Upon Sin	The Guilt of Mankind	God's Retribution Against the Gentiles
1:18-23	1:18-32	1:18-23	1:18-23	1:18-23
1:24-32		1:24-25	1:24-25	1:24-25
		1:26-27	1:26-27	1:26-27
		1:28-32	1:28-32	1:28-32

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following Special Topics: Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure, Textual Criticism, and Glossary.

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Romans 1:1-7 forms the introduction to the letter. It is the longest introduction of any of Paul's letters. He was trying to introduce himself and his theology to a church who did not know him personally and may have heard negative information about him.

B. Romans 1:8-12 is an opening prayer of thanksgiving. This was characteristic of Greek letters generally and of Paul's writings specifically.
SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S PRAISE, PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD

C. Romans 1:16-17 states the theme of the book.

D. Romans 1:18 through 3:20 form the first literary unit and the first point of Paul's gospel; all humans (3 groups) are lost and need to be saved (cf. Genesis 3; see SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FALL OF MANKIND).
1. immoral pagans
2. moral pagans
3. Jews

E. Romans 1:18-3:20 reflects Genesis 3 (surprisingly the rabbis do not focus on this text, but Genesis 6, as the origin of sin; see SPECIAL TOPIC: SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS6). Humanity was created for fellowship with God, in His very image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind chose enlightenment and the promise of power and independence. In effect, humans exchanged the exaltation of God for the exaltation of themselves (atheistic humanism)!

God allowed this crisis. To be in God's image is to be responsible, to be morally accountable, to be volitionally free with consequences. God separates humans by both His choice and theirs (a covenant relationship; see SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT)! He allows them to choose self with all its consequences. God is grieved (cf. Gen. 6:5-7), but humans are free moral agents with all the rights and responsibilities that brings. The repeated phrase "God gave them over" (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28) is the recognition of that freedom, not solely a willful rejection by God. This was not God's choice. This is not the world that God intended (cf. Gen. 3:22; 6:5-7,11-13)!

F. The theological summary of Rom. 1:18-3:20 is found in Rom. 3:21-31. This is the first theological point of the "good news" of the gospel; the "bad news" that all humans have sinned and have need of God's forgiveness. God graciously provides a way back to intimate fellowship (i.e., Eden experience, compare Genesis 1-2 with Revelation 21-22).
SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GOSPEL

G. In this first literary unit of Paul's presentation of the gospel it is interesting to note that fallen mankind is held responsible for their rebellion and sin without any reference to Satan or the demonic (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20). This section certainly reflects the theology of Genesis 3, but without a personal tempter. God will not allow fallen mankind to blame Satan again (cf. Gen. 3:13) or God Himself (cf. Gen. 3:12). Humans are made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6). They have the right, power and obligation to choose. They are responsible for their choices both corporately in Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21) and individually in personal sin (cf. Rom. 3:23).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:1-6

[1]Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2]which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3]concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, [4]who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5]through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, [6]among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

1:1 "Paul" Most Jews of Paul's day who lived outside Palestine had two first names, one Jewish, one Roman (cf. Acts 13:9). Paul's Jewish name was "Saul." He, like the ancient King of Israel, was of the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5). His Roman name in Greek form, "Paul" (Paulos), meant "little." This referred to

1. his physical stature which was alluded to in a second century non-canonical book, *The Acts of Paul,* in a chapter about Thessalonica called "Paul and Thekla"
2. his personal sense of being least of the saints because he originally persecuted the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15)
3. simply the name given by his parents at birth
4. "Saul" sounded similar to an effeminate word

Option #3 seems best.

▣ **"a bond-servant"** NKJV, NRSV, TEV and JB translations read "servant." This concept was either

1. a way to magnify Jesus as Lord
2. an OT honorific title (cf. Moses in Num. 12:7 and Jos. 1:1; Joshua in Jos. 24:29; and David in the Psalms (title), and Isaiah 42:1, 19; 52:13)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MY SERVANT

▣

NASB, TEV, NJB, REB "Christ Jesus"
NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta "Jesus Christ"

"Christ Jesus" is more unusual and, therefore, probably original (cf. MSS P^{10}, B). The UBS^4 gives it a "B" rating (almost certain). See SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD).

However, the other form has really good attestation (cf. MSS P^{26}, ℵ, A, D, G, and most early church Fathers). Most of the textual variants are like this one in the sense that they do not affect the basic meaning of the Greek text.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

▣ **"called as an apostle"** This was God's choice, not his (cf. Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 3:7). With this phrase Paul is asserting his spiritual qualifications and authority, as he does in 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1) to this church he had never met.

The Koine term "apostle" in Palestinian Jewish circles of the first century meant "one sent as an official representative" (cf. 2 Chr. 17:7-9). In the NT this term was used in two senses:

1. of the Twelve special disciples and Paul
2. of a spiritual gift that continues in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (*APOSTELLŌ*)

▣ **"set apart"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which implied that he was set apart by God in the past (cf. Jer. 1:5 and Gal. 1:15) and this continued as a state of being.

This was a possible play on the Aramaic word for "Pharisee." They were separated to Jewish legalism (and Paul also [Phil. 3:5] before his Damascus Road encounter with Jesus), but now he was separated to the gospel.

It is related to the Hebrew word for "holy" (BDB 872), which meant "set apart for God's use" (cf. Exod. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5). The terms "saint," "sanctify," and "set apart" all had the same Greek root, "holy" (*hagios*).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

▣ **"for the gospel of God"** The PREPOSITION *eis* in this context (and Rom. 1:5) shows the purpose of Paul's "call" (Rom. 1:1b) and being "set apart" (Rom. 1:1c).

Gospel is a compound word from "good" (*eu*) and "message" (*angellos*). It became the term that described

1. the doctrines revealed in the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-32)
2. God's promised Messiah (cf. Rom. 1:3-4). It is the "gospel of His Son" (Rom. 1:2)

This is God's gospel, not Paul's (cf. Rom. 15:16; Mark 1:14; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2,8,9; 1 Pet. 4:17). Paul was not an innovator or cultural adapter, but a proclaimer of the truth he received (cf. Acts 9; 1 Cor. 1:18-25).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GOSPEL

1:2 "He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures" This VERB is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE. It is used only in Paul's writings (here and 2 Cor. 9:5). The gospel was no afterthought with God, but His eternal, purposeful plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Isa. 53; Ps. 118; Mark 10:45; Luke. 2:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; Titus 1:2). See SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

The early sermons in Acts (the *kerygma*) present Jesus as the fulfillment of OT promises and prophecies. The OT is referred to in the NT in two common ways.

1. "it is written" (or "writings," i.e., 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:16)
2. Scripture(s)

It is also referred to in connection with the prophets. In the Jewish mind prophets wrote Scripture.

1. "the Law or the Prophets," Matt. 5:17-18; also note Luke 24:44
2. "prophecy," Luke 24:27
3. "writings of the prophets," Matt. 26:56
4. "prophetic writings," Rom. 16:26 (Rom. 1:2 also mentions "prophets")
5. "prophecy of Scripture," 2 Pet. 1:20

There are two instances of the ADJECTIVE "holy" attached.

1. "holy Scriptures" (full clause also mentions "prophets"), Rom. 1:2
2. "sacred writings," 2 Tim. 3:15

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE *KERYGMA* OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1:3 "concerning His Son" The central message of the Good News is a person, Jesus of Nazareth, virgin-born son of Mary. In the OT the nation, the king, and the Messiah were called "son" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Hos. 11:1; Ps. 2:7; Matt. 2:15).

In the OT God spoke through servants and prophets. Jesus was not a servant of God. He was a family member (i.e., "a son," cf. Heb.1:1-2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28).

Surprisingly this context is the only place in the book where Paul focuses on Christology. Romans is not a complete systematic theology.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD

▣ **"who was born a descendant of David"** This relates to the prophecy of 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17. The Messiah was of the royal line of David (cf. Isa. 9:7; 11:1,10; Jer. 23:5; 30:9; 33:15) from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:4-12; Isa. 65:9). In Matthew's Gospel Jesus is acknowledged as David's descendant several times (cf. Matt. 1:6; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42), which reflected the Jewish hope of a coming Davidic savior.

It is surprising that Paul did not emphasize this aspect of Jesus. He mentioned it only here and in 2 Tim. 2:8; both passages may have been quotes from an early church's creedal formula. The NIDNTT, vol. 3, p. 61, lists several NT Scripture texts which may reflect early Christological creeds/hymns/liturgy (i.e., Rom. 1:3-4; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:8; 1 Pet. 3:18-20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

▣

NASB, NKJV, NRSV	**"according to the flesh"**
TEV	**"as to his humanity"**
NJB	**"according to human nature"**
REB	**"on the human level"**
Peshitta	**"in the flesh"**

This was fulfillment of prophecy and an affirmation of Jesus' humanity, which was often denied in the eclectic religious world of the first century (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 4:1-3; see SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM). This verse clearly shows that Paul did not always use the term "flesh" (*sarx*) in a negative sense (cf. Rom. 2:28; 9:3). However, usually Paul used "flesh" to contrast "spirit" (cf. Rom. 6:19; 7:5,18,25; 8:3-9,12,13; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:17; 11:18; Gal. 3:3; 5:13,16,17-19,24; 6:8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:11,13,18,23).

This grammatical construction *kata* (according to) plus an ACCUSATIVE is paralleled in Rom. 1:4. Jesus is both human (according to the flesh, Rom. 1:3) and divine (according to the Spirit, Rom. 1:4). This doctrine of incarnation is crucial (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). It may also be the implication of Jesus' self-chosen designation, "Son of Man" (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1 [human] and Dan. 7:13 [divine]).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF MAN

SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH *(SARX)*

1:4

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NIV	**"declared"**
TEV	**"shown"**
NJB, RSV	**"designated"**
NET	**"appointed"**

REB	**"proclaimed"**
Peshitta	**"came to be known as"**

This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. God definitively appointed Jesus "the Son of God." This does not imply that Bethlehem was the beginning of Jesus or that He is inferior to the Father.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

▣ **"to be the Son of God with power"** The NT authors did not often refer to Jesus by the title "Son of God" (cf. Matt. 4:3) because of the false implications from Greek mythology (the same is true of the virgin birth). The concept is usually qualified by "unique, one of a kind" (*monogenes*, cf. John 1:18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9). Thus the meaning is "Jesus, the only true Son of God."

The NT has three theological affirmations related to God the Father and Jesus the Son.

1. they are equal (cf. John1:1; 5:18; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28; 2 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3)
2. they are separate personalities (cf. Mark 10:18; 14:36; 15:34)
3. the Son is subservient to the Father during His time on earth

It is possible that Paul was quoting an early Christological creed or alluding to YHWH's Messianic King in Ps. 2:6,7 or 110:1 (cf. Acts 2:34-36). In so doing he was emphasizing the whole phrase "the Son of God with power" (NIDNTT, vol. 2, p. 79) which focused, not on His birth or baptism, but His ascension. However, Adoptionist Christologies took the verse and quoted it for their own reasons.

With this proof-texting method of Bible interpretation, one can make the Bible say anything (see my seminar on Biblical Interpretation free online at www.freebiblecommentary.org, first red box on the home page).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF GOD

▣ **"by the resurrection"** God the Father affirmed Jesus' life and message by raising Him from the dead (cf. Rom. 4:24; 6:4,9; 8:11; Acts 2:31-33). The pre-existent Deity of Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:2-3) and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Rom. 4:25; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 15) are the twin pillars of Christianity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RESURRECTION

▣ This verse was often used to advocate the heresy of "adoptionism" which asserted that Jesus was rewarded and elevated by God for His exemplary life of obedience. The heretics asserted that He was not always (ontologically) deity, but became deity when God raised Him from the dead. Although this is clearly untrue, which is obvious from many texts such as John 1 and 17, something wonderful was conferred on Jesus at His resurrection. It is difficult to express how deity can be rewarded, yet that is what happened. Even though Jesus shared eternal glory with the Father, His status was somehow enriched by the perfect fulfillment of His assigned redemptive task. The resurrection was the Father's affirmation of the life, example, teachings, and sacrificial death of Jesus of Nazareth; eternally divine, fully human, perfect savior, restored and rewarded, unique Son!

SPECIAL TOPIC: ADOPTIONISM

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"according to the Spirit of holiness"**
NKJV	**"according to the spirit of holiness"**
TEV	**"as to his divine holiness"**
NJB	**"in order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness"**
REB	**"on the level of the Spirit**

Peshitta "with the Holy Spirit"

Some translations capitalize the "S" in Spirit, implying the Holy Spirit, while the lowercase "s" would refer to the human spirit of Jesus. As God the Father is Spirit, so too, is Jesus. The ancient Hebrew and Greek texts had no capitalizations, no punctuation, and no chapter or verse divisions, so these are all points of tradition or the interpretation by translators.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE NT

There are three ways to view verses 3 and 4.

1. as a reference to Jesus' two natures, human and divine
2. as a reference to two stages in His earthly life, human and resurrected Lord
3. as a parallel to "Jesus Christ our Lord"

▣ **"Jesus"** The Aramaic name *Jesus* is the same as the Hebrew name *Joshua*. It was a compound of two Hebrew words "YHWH" and "salvation." It can mean "YHWH saves," "YHWH delivers" or "YHWH is salvation." The thrust of the meaning can be seen in Matt. 1:21,25.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD

▣ **"Christ"** This was the Greek translation of the Hebrew term *messiah* (BDB 603), which meant "an anointed one." In the OT several groups of leaders (prophets, priests, and kings) were anointed as a sign of God's choice and equipping. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

The OT predicted that God would send a special "anointed one" to usher in the New Age of Righteousness. Jesus was His special "servant," "son," and "Messiah."

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

▣ **"Lord"** In Judaism the Covenant name for God, YHWH, became so holy that the rabbis substituted the title "Lord," (*Adon*) when reading the Scriptures because they were afraid they might take God's name in vain (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) and thereby break one of the Ten Commandments. When NT authors called Jesus "Lord" ("Kurios") in theological contexts, they were affirming His deity (cf. Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:6-11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD (*KURIOS*)

1:5 "we" Paul mentions no other person in his introduction, as he often does in his other letters. This first phrase of v. 5 refers to Paul's Damascus Road conversion and appointment (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18), which strongly implies the editorial use of "we."

▣ **"we have received grace and apostleship"** Paul is affirming not only the gift of salvation through Christ, but also and connected to it, the call to be the apostle to the Gentiles. All of this occurred instantaneously on the road to Damascus (AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). It was not from merit, but purposeful grace!

It is possible that "grace" and "apostleship" are to be taken as one unit, "the gift of apostleship" (NET Bible note #13). All of the various translations listed in *The New Testament in 26 Translations* (p. 646) see it as a hendiadys also.

▣ **"to bring about"** This is a second use of *eis* in a purpose context (cf. Rom. 1:1). The gospel restores the image of God in mankind (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 5:1; 9:6) through faith in Jesus. This allows the original purpose of God to be manifested, which is a people in intimate fellowship with Him who reflect His character (cf. Rom. 1:7).

▣

NASB, NJB "the obedience of faith"
NKJV "for obedience to the faith"

NRSV	**"to bring about the obedience of faith"**
TEV	**"to believe and obey"**
REB	**"to faith and obedience"**
Peshitta	**"the faith"**

This is the first usage of the pivotal term, "faith," in Romans (see SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST). It was used in three distinct ways in this chapter and book.

1. Verse 5. It is used of a body of truths or doctrines related to Jesus and the Christian life (cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Rom. 14:1; 16:26; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Jude 3, 20).
2. Verse 8. It is used in the sense of personal trust in Jesus. The English terms "believe," "faith," and "trust" all translate one Greek term (*pistis/pisteuo*). The gospel is both conceptual (doctrine) and personal (cf. v.16; John 1:12; 3:16).
   SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FAITH
3. Verse 17. It is used in its OT sense of trustworthiness, loyalty, or dependability. This is the meaning of Hab. 2:4. In the OT there was not a developed doctrine of faith, but example after example of lives of faith (cf. Abraham in Gen. 15:6), not perfect faith but struggling faith (cf. Hebrews 11). The hope of mankind is not in their ability to perform or believe correctly, but in God's character (cf. Rom. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). Only God is faithful (cf. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; Mal. 3:6; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13)!
   SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OT.
   There is a series of acts that can be called the salvation event.
   a. repentance (cf. Rom. 2:4; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; see SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE (NT))
   b. belief/faith (cf. Rom. 1:16; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 16:31, baptism is the public declaration of one's faith)
   c. obedience (cf. Rom. 2:13; 2 Cor. 9:13; 10:5; 1 Pet. 1:2,22; see SPECIAL TOPIC: KEEP)
   d. perseverance (cf. Rom. 2:7; Luke. 18:1; 2 Cor. 4:1,16; Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13)

These are the conditions of the New Covenant. We must receive/believe and continue to receive/believe God's offer in Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16; John 1:12).

▣

NASB, NRSV, Peshitta	**"among all the Gentiles"**
NKJV	**"among all the nations"**
TEV, REB	**"people of all nations"**
NJB	**"to all pagan nations"**

This is the universal gospel. God's promise of redemption in Gen. 3:15 included all mankind. Jesus' substitutionary death included all of the fallen children of Adam (cf. Rom. 5:18; John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:33,51; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:11-3:13; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). Paul sees his special call as preaching God's gospel to Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:29; Eph. 3:2,8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH's ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

▣

NASB	**"for His name's sake"**
NKJV	**"for His name"**
NRSV	**"for the sake of his name"**
TEV	**"for the sake of Christ"**
NJB	**"for the honor of his name"**

REB	**"in his name"**
Peshitta	**"which bears his name"**

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

1:6 "you also" Paul was an extreme example (i.e., persecutor of the church) of the grace of God, but his readers were also examples of the undeserved, unmerited grace of God.

1:6	
NASB, NKJV	**"the called of Jesus Christ"**
NRSV	**"who are called to belong to Jesus Christ"**
TEV	**"whom God has called to belong to Jesus Christ"**
NJB	**"by his call belong to Jesus Christ"**
REB	**"who have heard the call and belong to Jesus Christ"**
Peshitta	**"called by the name of Jesus Christ"**

This may be

1. a play on the term "church," which meant "the called out ones" or "gathered ones"
2. a reference to divine election (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; 9:1ff; Eph.1:4, 11; 3:21; 4:1,4)
3. the Revised English Bible translation of the phrase, "you who have heard the call and belong to Jesus Christ"

This also reflects the understanding of this phrase as translated in the NRSV, TEV, and JB.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:7

[7]to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:7 "beloved of God" This phrase was often used of Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Now it was used of the church in Rome! This shows the depth of God's love for those who trust in His Son. This kind of transfer can also be seen in Eph. 1:20 (God's actions on behalf of Jesus) and Eph. 2:5-6 (Jesus' actions on behalf of believers).

▣ **"in Rome"** Paul did not start this church. No one knows who did (see Intro.). Romans was a letter introducing himself to a church already established. The book of Romans is Paul's most developed presentation of the gospel he preached. It is least affected by a local situation although there existed tensions between believing Jewish and Gentile leaders to whom he comments throughout the letter (esp. Romans 9-11).

▣

NASB	**"called *as* saints"**
NKJV, NRSV, NJB	**"called to be saints"**
TEV, REB	**"called to be his own people"**
Peshitta	**"called and sanctified"**

The term "saints" referred to the believers' position in Christ, not their sinlessness. It should also describe their progressive Christlikeness. The term was always PLURAL except in Phil. 4:21. However, even in this context it is corporate. To be a Christian is to be part of a community, a family, a body. We are saved and gifted for the Body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11).

Verse 1 indicates that Paul was called to be an apostle. Believers are "the called of Jesus Christ" in verse 6. Believers are also called "saints" in verse 7. This "calling" was a NT way of asserting the truth of the initiating priority of God (i.e., John 6:44,65). No fallen human ever called himself (cf. Rom. 3:9-13; Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 2:25). God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65; 15:16). He always brings the covenant conditions to us. This is true of our salvation (our imputed righteousness or legal standing), but also our giftedness for effective service (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11), and our Christian lives.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

▣ **"Grace to you and peace from God"** This is Paul's characteristic opening blessing. It is a word play on the traditional Greek opening term "greetings" (*charein*) modified to the uniquely Christian term opening greeting, "grace" (*charis*). Paul may have been combining this Greek opening with the traditional Hebrew greeting *shalom* or "peace." However, this is only speculation, however, notice that theologically "grace" always precedes "peace."

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE IN PAUL

▣ **"from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"** Paul regularly uses only one PREPOSITION for both names (cf. 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). This was his way of grammatically linking these two Persons of the Trinity. This would emphasize Jesus' deity and equality with the Father.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:8-15

[8]First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. [9]For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of His Son, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you, [10]always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. [11]For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; [12]that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. [13]I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. [14]I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. [15]So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

1:8 "First" In this context "first" means "from the beginning" or "I must begin" (J. B. Phillips).

▣ **"I thank my God through Jesus Christ"** Paul normally addresses his prayers to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus is our only way to approach God!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

▣ **"for you all"** This use of "all," like Rom. 1:7, may reflect the jealousy and conflict between the believing Jewish leaders who fled Rome under Nero's edict and the resultant believing Gentile leaders who had replaced them for a few years. Romans 9-11 addresses this same issue.

It is also possible that the inclusion is addressed to "the weak" and "the strong" of Rom. 14:1-15:13. God loves all of the church at Rome and He loves them equally!

▣ **"because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world"** Romans 16:19 made allusion to the same truth. This was obviously an Oriental overstatement (hyperbole) referring to the Roman world (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8). See C. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*.

1:9 "God. . .is my witness" Paul was taking an oath in God's name (cf. Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23; 11:10-11,31; 12:19; Gal. 1:20; 1 Thess. 2:5). This was his Jewish way of asserting his truthfulness.

▣ **"in my spirit"** This is a good example of the use of *pneuma* for the human spirit (cf. Rom. 8:5,10,16; 12:11) used in the sense of human life (i.e., breath, Hebrew *ruach*, BDB 924, cf. Gen. 6:17; 7:15,22).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA) IN THE NT

▣

NASB	**"how unceasingly"**
NKJV, NRSV	**"without ceasing"**
NJB	**"continually mention"**
NIV	**"how constantly"**
REB	**"continually"**
Peshitta	**"unceasingly I make mention"**

This theme of Paul's constant and urgent prayers (cf. 1 Thess. 1:2; 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:3) should be an example church leaders diligently follow (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer opens a powerful spiritual door. We have not because we ask not (James 4:2).

1:10 "always in my prayers making request" Paul did not start this church and yet he consistently prayed for it (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28), as he did for all his churches! However, Paul had many friends and co-workers in the Roman church as chapter 16 clearly shows.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

▣ **"if"** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:22-24). He probably did not plan to stay a long time. Paul always wanted to minister in a new field where no other person had worked (cf. Rom. 15:20; 2 Cor. 10:15,16). It is possible that one of the purposes of the Roman letter was to solicit funds for his missionary journey to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:24).

▣ **"by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you"** This is paralleled in Rom. 1:13 and 15:32. Paul did not feel that his life and travel plans belonged to himself, but to God (cf. Acts 18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7).

Also notice that God's will can be affected by believers' prayers!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER

1:11 "For I long to see you" This parallels Rom. 15:23. For a long time Paul wanted to meet the believers in Rome (cf. Acts 19:21).

▣ **"that I may impart some spiritual gift to you"** The phrase "spiritual gift" was used in the sense of spiritual insight or blessing. Paul saw himself as uniquely called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 1:15).

▣ **"that you may be established"** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE of *histēmi*. The word has three meanings.

1. establish, Rom. 1:11; 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Pet. 1:12
2. strengthen, Luke 22:32; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; James 5:8; Rev. 3:2
3. a Semitic idiom for making a firm decision, Luke 9:51

SPECIAL TOPIC: STAND (*histēmi*)

1:12 This is the purpose of Christian fellowship. The gifts are meant to unite believers into a ministering community. Believers are gifted for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). All gifts are relevant. All the gifts are given by the Spirit at salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11). All believers are called, gifted, full-time ministers (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). Paul clearly states his sense of Apostolic authority, but also a community-wide mutuality. Believers need one another! Believers are the Body of Christ.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1:13 "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren" This is an idiom which Paul uses often to introduce important statements (cf. Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). It is similar in literary purpose to Jesus' "Amen, amen."

▣ **"and have been prevented thus far"** This is a PASSIVE VERB. This same phrase occurs in 1 Thess. 2:18 where Satan is the agent. Paul believed his life was guided by God but disrupted by Satan. Somehow both are true (cf. Job 1-2; Daniel 10).

The use of this term in Rom. 15:22 implies the hindrance was Paul's missionary work in the eastern Mediterranean area, which is not yet complete (but close).

▣ **"that I might obtain some fruit among you"** In this context "fruit" may refer to converts, but in John 15:1-8 and Gal. 5:22 it referred to Christian maturity. Matthew 7 says "by your fruit you shall be known," but it does not define the term fruit. The best parallel is probably Phil. 1:22, where Paul uses this same agricultural imagery.

1:14 "I am under obligation" Paul uses this term several times in Romans.

1. Paul is obligated to preach the gospel to all Gentiles (here).
2. Paul is not obligated to "the flesh" (Rom. 8:12).
3. The Gentile church is obligated to help the mother church in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:27).

▣ **"to Greeks"** This referred to the civilized, cultured people around the Mediterranean Sea. Alexander the Great and his followers had Hellenized the known world. The Romans had taken over and assimilated the Greek culture.

▣ **"to Barbarians"** This (*onomatopoeia*) term meant the uneducated or uncultured people groups, usually to the north. It was used of people who did not speak Greek. Their speech sounded like "bar bar bar" to the Greeks and Romans.

▣ **"to the wise and to the foolish"** It is possible that this is parallel in the Greek text to "barbarians," but not necessarily so. This may be another way of referring to all people groups and individuals.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOOLISH PEOPLE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:16-17

16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *MAN* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

1:16-17 Verses 16-17 are the theme of the entire book. This theme is amplified and summarized in Rom. 3:21-31.

1:16	
NASB, NRSV, REB	**"I am not ashamed of the gospel"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"**
TEV	**"I have complete confidence in the gospel"**
NJB	**"I am not ashamed of the Good News"**

Paul may be alluding to Jesus' words in Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26. He is not ashamed of
1. the content of the gospel
2. the resulting persecution (cf. 2 Tim. 1:12,16)

In 1 Cor. 1:23 the Jews were ashamed of the gospel because it affirmed a suffering Messiah and the Greeks because it affirmed the resurrection of the body.

▣ **"salvation"** In the OT, the Hebrew term (*yasho*) primarily referred to physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15), but in the NT the Greek term (*sōzō*) refers primarily to spiritual deliverance (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18, 21). See Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 124-126.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT TERM)

▣

NASB, Peshitta	**"to every one who believes"**
NKJV	**"for everyone who believes"**
NRSV, REB	**"to everyone who has faith"**
TEV	**"all who believe"**
NJB	**"all who have faith"**

The gospel is for all humans (oh, how I love the words "everyone," "whosoever," "all," see note at Rom. 1:5, 6th item), but believing is one of the conditions for acceptance (cf. Acts 16:30-31). The other is repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16 and 19; 20:21). God deals with mankind by means of covenant. He always takes the initiative and sets the agenda (cf. John 6:44,65). But there are several reciprocal conditions (see note at Rom. 1:5, 4th item).

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

The Greek term, here translated "believe," can also be translated in English by the terms "faith" or "trust." The Greek word has a wider connotation than any one English word. Notice it is a PRESENT PARTICIPLE. Saving faith is continuing faith (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15; 1 Thess. 4:14)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE OR TRUST

Originally the related Hebrew terms behind this Greek term for "faith" meant a stable stance, a man with his feet apart so that he could not be easily moved. The opposite OT metaphor would be "my feet were in the miry clay" (Ps. 40:2), "my feet almost slipped" (Ps. 73:2). The Hebrew related roots, *emun, emunah, aman*, came to be used metaphorically of someone who was trustworthy, loyal, or dependable. Saving faith does not reflect fallen mankind's ability to be faithful, but God's! Believers' hopes do not reside in their abilities but in God's character and promises. It is His trustworthiness, His faithfulness, His promises!

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OT

▣ **"to the Jew first"** The reason for this is discussed briefly in Rom. 2:9-10 and 3:1-20 and fully developed in Romans 9-11. It follows Jesus' statements in Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Mark 7:27; John 4:22. They were first in YHWH's choice of a people for Him to reveal Himself through—being first in opportunity to know God and first in judgment for covenant disobedience.

This may relate to the jealousy between believing Jew and Gentile leadership in the Roman church.

1:17 "the righteousness of God" This phrase in context referred to (1) God's character, and (2) how He gives that character to sinful mankind. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) translation has "this is what reveals the justice of God." While this does refer to the believer's moral lifestyle, it primarily concerns his legal standing before the Righteous Judge. This imputation of the righteousness of God to fallen, sinful mankind, since the Reformation, has been characterized as "justification by grace through faith" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). This is the very verse that changed Martin Luther's life and theology!

However, the goal of justification is sanctification, Christlikeness, or the righteous character of God (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15). Righteousness is not only a legal pronouncement, it is a call to a holy life; the image of God in mankind is to be functionally restored (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

▣

NASB, NKJV, Peshitta	**"from faith to faith"**
NRSV	**"through faith for faith"**
TEV	**"it is through faith, from beginning to end"**
NJB	**"it shows how faith leads to faith"**
REB	**"beginning in faith and ending in faith"**

This phrase has two PREPOSITIONS, *ek* and *eis*, which denote a transition or development. He uses this same structure in 2 Cor. 2:16 and *apo* and *eis* in 2 Cor. 3:18. Christianity is a gift which is expected to become a lifestyle.

There are several possibilities in translating this phrase. The Williams NT translates it as "the Way of faith that leads to greater faith." The main theological points are

1. faith comes from God ("revealed")
2. mankind must respond and continue to respond
3. faith must result in a godly life

One thing is certain, "faith" in Christ is crucial (cf. Rom. 5:1; Phil. 3:9). God's offer of salvation is conditioned on a faith response (cf. Mark 1:15; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 3:16 and 19; 20:21).

▣

NASB. Peshitta	**"But the righteous man shall live by faith"**
NKJV	**"The just shall live by faith"**
NRSV	**"The one who is righteous will live by faith"**
TEV	**"He who is put right with God lthrough faith shall live"**
NJB	**"The upright man finds life through faith"**
REB	**"Whoever is justified through faith shall gian life"**

This was a quote from Hab. 2:4, but not from the Masoretic Text (MT) or the Septuagint (LXX). In the OT "faith" had the expanded metaphorical meaning of "trustworthiness," "faithfulness," or "loyalty to." Saving faith is based on God's faithfulness (cf. Rom. 3:5,21,22,25,26). However, human faithfulness is evidence that one has trusted in God's provision. This same OT text is quoted in Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38. The next literary unit, Romans 1:18-3:20, reveals the opposite of faithfulness to God.

It may be helpful to list how several modern commentators understand the last part of the phrase.

1. Vaughan: "begins in faith and ends in faith"
2. Hodge: "by faith alone"
3. Barrett: "on the basis of nothing but faith"
4. Knox: "faith first and last"
5. Stagg: "the upright out of faith shall live"

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:18-23

[18]For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, [19]because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. [20]For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. [21]For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [22]Professing to be wise, they became fools, [23]and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

1:18 "for" Notice the number of times *gar* is used in the theme statement of verses 16-17—three times, and now it introduces Paul's first point of the gospel (i.e., the bad news, Rom. 1:18-3:31), which is contrasted with the power of God unto salvation (i.e., the good news, Rom. 1:16-17).

▣ **"the wrath of God"** Verses 18-23 depict the pagan world of Paul's day. Paul's characterization of the pagan world is also found in Jewish literature (cf. *Wisdom of Solomon* 13:1ff. and *Letter of Aristeas*, 134-38) and even in Greek and Roman ethical writings. The same Bible that tells us of God's love also reveals His wrath (cf. Rom. 1:23-32; 2:5,8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4-5).

Both wrath and love are human terms which are applied to God. They express the truth that God has a way He wants believers to believe and to live. One's willful rejection of God's will (the gospel of Christ) results in consequences both temporal, as in this verse, and eschatological (cf. Rom. 2:5). However, God must not be viewed as vindictive. Judgment is His "strange work" (cf. Isa. 28:21ff). Love is His character, compare Deut. 5:9 to 5:10; 7:9. In Him justice and mercy

coexist. Yet all will give an account to God (cf. Eccl. 12:13-14; Gal. 6:7), even Christians (cf. Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHISM)

▣ **"is revealed"** As the gospel is a revealed truth (Rom. 1:17), so too, the wrath of God! Neither is an act of human discovery or logic.

▣ **"who suppress the truth"** This referred to human willful rejection, not ignorance (cf. Rom. 1:21,32; John 3:17-21). This phrase can mean

1. they know the truth but reject it
2. their lifestyle shows they reject the truth
3. their lives and/or words cause others not to know and receive the truth

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

1:19 "that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" All humans know something of God from creation (cf. Rom. 1:20 and Ps. 19:1-6 through nature). In theology this is called "natural revelation." It is not complete, but it is the basis of God's holding responsible those who have never been exposed to God's "special revelation" in Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; see notes online) or, ultimately, in Jesus (cf. John 1:14-18; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3).

The term "know" was used in two senses in the NT:

1. its OT sense of intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5)
2. its Greek sense of facts about a subject (cf. Rom. 1:21)

The gospel is both a Person to be welcomed and a message about that Person to be received and believed! In this verse it was used only in the sense of #2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW

1:20 This verse mentions three aspects of God.

1. His invisible attributes (His character, cf. Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27)
2. His eternal power (seen in natural creation, cf. Ps. 19:1-6)
3. His divine nature (seen in His acts and motives of creation, cf. Genesis 1-2)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (NT)

▣ **"for since the creation of the world"** The PREPOSITION *apo* is used in a temporal sense. A similar phrase is found in Mark 10:6; 13:19; 2 Pet. 3:4. The invisible God is now seen in

1. physical creation (this verse)
2. Scripture (Ps. 19, 119)
3. ultimately in Jesus (cf. John 14:9)

▣ **"divine nature"** From Greek literature *theiotēs* could be translated "divine majesty." This is seen supremely in Jesus. He uniquely bears the divine image (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3). He is God's full revelation in human form (Col. 1:19; 2:9). The wonderful truth of the gospel is that fallen mankind, through faith in Christ, will share Christlikeness (cf. Heb. 12:10; 1 John 3:2). The image of God in humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) has been restored (*theios*, cf. 2 Pet. 1:3-4)!

▣

NASB	**"have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made"**
NKJV	**"are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"**
NRSV	**"have been understood and seen through the things he has made"**

TEV	**"have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made"**
NJB	**"have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things"**
REB	**"have been visible to the eye of reason, in the things he has made"**
Peshitta	**"have been clearly seen and understood by his creation"**

The combination of *noeō* (cf. Matt. 15:17) and *kathoraō* (both PRESENT PASSIVE) implies a true perception. God has written two books: (1) nature (cf. Ps. 19:1-6) and (2) Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14). They do not contradict each other. They are both capable of human understanding and demand a response (cf. *Wisdom* 13:1-9).

▣ **"so that they are without excuse"** This is literally "no legal defense." This Greek term (*a* plus *apologeomai*) is used only here and in Rom. 2:1 in the NT. Remember the theological purpose of Rom. 1:18-3:20 is to show the spiritual lostness of all mankind. Humans are responsible for the knowledge they do have. God holds humans responsible only for that which they know or could know (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13).

1:21 "for even though they knew God" Humans are not progressing religiously. They are progressively evil (cf. Gen. 6:5-7,11-13). Since Genesis 3 humanity has been going downhill. The darkness is increasing!

▣ **"they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks"** This is the tragedy of pagan idolatry in Rom. 1:23, 24 (cf. Jer. 2:9-13). Believers "glorify" God by Christlike living (cf. Matt. 5:16; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Phil. 1:20; 1 Pet. 4:11). YHWH wants a people who reflect/reveal His character to a fallen, blind world!

▣ **"but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."** *The New Testament: A New Translation* by Olaf M. Morlie has "rather they busied themselves with silly speculations about Him, and their stupid minds groped about in the dark." Human religious systems are monuments to spiritual rebellion and pride (cf. Rom. 1:22; Col. 2:16-23).

The word translated "futile" was used in the LXX to refer to the "vain," "non-existent" idols of Israel's neighbors. Paul was a Hebrew thinker who knew the Septuagint. The use of Greek words in the LXX is a better guide to the NT authors' thoughts than Greek lexicons.

The two VERBS are AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES. Does the PASSIVE VOICE imply that their lack of understanding and proper response was because God veiled their hearts or that their rejection of the light had hardened their hearts (cf. Rom. 10:12-16; 2 Kgs. 17:15; Jer. 2:5; Eph. 4:17-19)? This is the same theological question related to Pharaoh in the exodus.

God hardened his heart	Pharaoh hardened his own heart
Exod. 4:21	Exod. 8:15
9:12	8:32
10:20	9:34
11:10	
14:4	
14:8	
14:17	

In Exod. 9:35 the hardening could refer to God or Pharaoh. This is the mystery of divine sovereignty and human free will!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD HARDENED

▣ **"heart"** This was used in the OT sense of the entire person. However, it was often a way of referring to the thinking and feeling process. See Special Topic at Rom. 1:24.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEART

1:22	
NASB, NKJV	**"Professing to be wise, they became fools"**
NRSV	**"Claiming to be wise, they became fools"**
TEV	**"They say they are wise, but they are fools"**
NJB	**"They boast of their wisdom, but they have made themselves fools"**
REB	**"The more they called themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew"**
Peshitta	**"While they thought within themselves that they are wise, they became fools"**

From the Greek word "fool" we get the English "moron." The problem is in mankind's pride and confidence in their own knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Col. 2:8-23). This goes back to Genesis 3. Knowledge brought separation and judgment. It is not that human knowledge is always wrong, it is just not ultimate!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FALL OF MANKIND

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOOLISH PEOPLE

1:23 Willfully ignorant humans who were made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6) turned God into earthly images such as

1. animals (Egypt)
2. forces of nature (Persia)
3. human forms (Greece/Rome)-idols! Even God's own people did this (cf. Deut. 4:15-24)

Some new forms of this old sin are

1. environmentalism (mother earth)
2. New Age eastern thought (mysticism, spiritualism, and the occult)
3. atheistic humanism (Marxism, utopianism, progressive idealism, and ultimate faith in politics or education)
4. holistic medicine (health and longevity)
5. education

For a good book see, Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*.

▣ **"glory"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (NT) and SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (OT)

▣ **"corruptible man"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTROY, RUIN, CORRUPT *(PHTHEIRŌ)*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:24-25

[24]Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. [25]For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

1:24, 26, 28 "God gave them over" This is the worst possible judgment. It is God saying "let fallen humanity have their own way." Paul alludes to several OT texts (cf. Ps. 81:12; Hosea 4:17;

Acts 7:42). Verses 23-32 describe God's rejection (temporal wrath) of the pagan world and its religiosity (and ours)! Paganism was and is characterized by sexual perversion and exploitation!

1:24 "hearts" See SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

1:25 "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" This can be understood in several ways.

1. the self-deification of mankind (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4,11)
2. mankind's worship of that which he has made-idols (cf. Isa. 44:20; Jer. 13:25; 16:19) instead of YHWH who created all things (cf. Rom. 1:18-23)
3. mankind's ultimate rejection of the truth of the gospel (cf. Jn 14:17; 1 John 2:21,27)

In context #2 fits best.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAULS' WRITINGS

▣ **"worshiped and served"** Mankind will always have gods. All humans sense there is someone, some truth, or something beyond themselves (i.e., naturalism, alien origins, spiritism, etc.).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WORSHIP

▣ **"who is blessed forever. Amen"** Paul burst into a Jewish blessing, which is so characteristic of him (cf. Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 11:31). Paul's prays often as he writes (cf. Rom. 9:5; 11:36; 15:33; 16:27).

▣ **"forever"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOM)

▣ **"Amen"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:26-27

[26]For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, [27]and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

1:26,27 Homosexuality is one example of life apart from God's obvious will in creation (be fruitful). It was a sin and a major cultural problem

1. in the OT (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:18)
2. in the Greco-Roman world (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10)
3. in our day

Homosexuality is probably listed as one example of the fallen life because of the entire context's orientation to Genesis 1-3. Mankind was made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was made male and female (cf. Gen. 1:27). God's command was to be fruitful and multiply (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7). Mankind's fall (cf. Genesis 3) disrupted God's plan and will. Homosexuality is an obvious violation! However it must be stated that this is not the only sin mentioned in the context (cf. Rom. 1:29-31). All sins show mankind's separation from God and their deserved punishment. All sin, especially lifestyle sin, is abhorrent to God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOMOSEXUALITY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 1:28-32

[28]And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over

to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, [29]being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, [30]slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31]without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; [32]and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

1:28-31 This is one sentence in Greek. It characterized rebellious, fallen, independent mankind (cf. Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 21:8).

The tragedy of humanity's sin was that they chose existence apart from God. Hell is that existence made permanent. Independence is a tragedy! Mankind needs God; he is lost, inadequate, and unfulfilled apart from Him. The worst part of an eternal hell is God's relational absence!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

1:29 "a depraved mind" What fallen mankind sees as freedom is self-worship: "Anything and everything for me!" The agent of the PASSIVE VOICE is stated as God in Rom. 1:24,26,28, but in this context's relationship to Genesis 1-3 it is mankind's choice of knowledge and self which caused the problem. God allowed His creation to suffer the consequences of their own choices, their own independence.

▣ **"being filled with"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Humans are filled and characterized by what they dwell upon. The rabbis would say that in every human heart is a black (evil *yetzer*) dog and a white (good *yetzer*) dog. The one who is fed the most becomes the largest.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FILLED

1:29-31 These are the results and symptoms of life without God. They characterize individuals and societies who choose to reject the God of the Bible. This was one of several lists of sins that Paul gave (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5-9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT

1:30 "arrogant" This is *huperēphanous* (see C., 3 below).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF "HUPER" COMPOUNDS

1:32 "those who practice such things are worthy of death" This statement reflects the Law of Moses. It is summarized in Rom. 6:16,21,23; 8:6,13. Death is the opposite of God's will and God's life (cf. Ezek. 18:32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

▣ **"but also give hearty approval to those who practice them"** Misery loves company. Fallen mankind uses the sins of others as an excuse, "everyone is doing it." Cultures are characterized by their particular sins!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Paul write to the Roman church?
2. Why was Romans such an important theological statement of Christianity?
3. Outline 1:18-3:20 in your own words.
4. Will those who have never heard the Gospel be rejected for not trusting Christ?
5. Explain the difference between "natural revelation" and "special revelation."
6. Describe human life without God.
7. Do verses 24-27 address the issue of homosexuality?

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